



Department of Housing and Urban Development – Mel Martinez, Secretary  
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## **MARTINEZ TO LEAD INTERAGENCY HOMELESS COUNCIL, OUTLINES NEW VISION TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Mel Martinez today told 600 advocates for the homeless that he is reactivating a federal council that will coordinate the activities of 15 agencies as part of a comprehensive effort to improve the delivery of federal services to homeless individuals and families.

In his speech to the annual conference of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, Martinez announced that the Interagency Council on the Homeless will meet for the first time in five years. As the HUD Secretary, Martinez will chair the Council.

“It’s time we reawaken this invaluable tool and put it back to work,” Martinez said. “Our goal is to make federal programs that help the homeless more responsive to the people they are designed to serve.”

Congress established the Council in 1987 to help streamline the government’s approach to homelessness by coordinating the multiple efforts of federal agencies and other designated groups.

In addition, Martinez said that HUD will launch four steps to further refine and improve the Department’s approach to serving the homeless. Those steps are:

- Proposing legislative changes that will enable HUD to re-channel its homeless funding into housing development, the agency’s core mission;
- Developing ways to meet the special needs of the chronically homeless by moving them toward permanent housing and the supportive services they require;
- Preventing homelessness through programs that reach those most at risk; and,
- Nurturing stronger ties with faith- and community-based organizations that are closest to the root causes of homelessness.

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“Community and faith-based organizations are the foot soldiers in our battle against homelessness,” said Martinez. “Government can and must join with groups, helping the helper, encouraging the inspired.”

Martinez took today’s actions to mobilize both the public and private sectors saying, “It’s time to dedicate ourselves to the next ‘great new American enterprise.’ It’s time to commit the multitudes of talents and resources that bless this nation to the task of providing appropriate support, and finding homes – permanent homes – for the homeless.”

On any given night, it’s estimated 600,000 people have no place to call home – approximately the number of residents of Memphis, the 18<sup>th</sup> largest U.S. city. Since 1987, the federal government has spent more than \$13 billion helping ease the plight of the nation’s homeless.

In addition to HUD, members of the Council will include the departments of Agriculture; Commerce; Defense; Education; Energy; Health and Human Services; Interior; Labor; and Transportation. Also included are Federal Emergency Management Administration; General Services Administration; Veterans Administration; Corporation for National and Community Service; Postal Service; and, other federal entities that the Council deems appropriate.

NAEH is a non-profit membership organization whose mission is to mobilize individuals and the nonprofit, profit and public sectors to end homelessness. The Alliance represents a united effort to attack the root causes of homelessness, and fight’s society’s acceptance of homelessness as an inevitable by-product of American life.

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